

# Higher Education Initiative Outcomes

Throughout history, cities that have been centers of great learning have usually also taken their place as economic powerhouses. Here in America, economists have long noticed that educated cities—that is, cities with a greater percentage of knowledgeable and skilled residents—have fared better economically than their unskilled counterparts, but the exact relationship between these forces hasn't always been well understood. *[Taken from <http://www.manhattan-institute.org/cgi-bin/apMI/print.cgi>]*

Kingsport realized in the late 1990s, that a critical predictor of economic diversity and urban growth is educational attainment. In order to diversify the economy, Kingsport needed to improve the educational attainment of its population. Statistics indicate, since the inception of the Higher Education Initiative there has been an increase in educational attainment of the Kingsport population 25 years and over.

These indicators include:

- A 20.8 percent decrease in those with less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education
- A 13.9 percent decrease in those 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade with no diploma
- A 23.0 percent increase in the High School Graduate (includes equivalence)
- A 27.5 percent increase in those with an Associate Degree
- A 19.2 percent increase in those with a Bachelor's Degree

With the community focusing on higher education as an economic development priority, Northeast State Technical Community College realized a 248 percent increase from 2000-2007, in the number of students graduating in the spring of each year from high school in Sullivan County who enrolled at NESTCC during the fall semester of the same years.

Since the opening of the Regional Center for Applied Technology in the fall of 2002, the Higher Education enrollment in the downtown campuses has risen to 1,208 students. This includes the Regional Center for Health Professions with the opening enrollment in the fall of 2008 at 351.

These numbers show success in pushing the importance of educational attainment for a diversified economy. During the higher education initiative years, NESTCC main campus has seen enrollment grow, evidencing that the numbers of students did not just migrate to the downtown area of Kingsport, but rather the numbers of those seeking higher education has risen in the region.

Kingsport realized that having an increase in its young adult population was critical to economic development. Over a seven year period during the initiative, the number of college age city residents (age 20-24) increased 26 percent.

The downtown area of Kingsport, where the city invested in the higher education facilities, experienced a \$20.2 M positive change in appraised property values. This

growth represents taxable property only. Non-taxable development like the higher education facilities and major church renovations are not included.

Since the late 1990s, Kingsport experienced a loss of 10,500 manufacturing jobs. Leaders recognized a major key to reinventing Kingsport was having a more diversified economy. Evidence of diversification is shown through the additions of 5,400 health care jobs, 2,800 leisure/ hospitality jobs, 1,300 natural resources/mining/construction jobs, 600 financial jobs, 500 information jobs. In 2000, there were 17,638 city residents employed. In 2007, 19,159 city residents were employed. During that same period of time the median family income rose nearly 20 percent to \$48,351.